DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 302 491 SO 019 598

AUTHOR Lester, Walter
TITLE Lesson Plans for Teaching about Politics and the Media: A Close Up Foundation Summer Institute.
PUB DATE 5 Aug 88
NOTE 10p.
PUB TYPE Guides - Classroom Use - Guides (For Teachers) (052)

EDRS PRICE MF01/PC01 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS Curriculum Guides; Elections; Learning Activities; Lesson Plans; *Media Adaptation; *Media Selection; *Political Candidates; Political Issues; *Politics; Resource Units; Secondary Education; Secondary School Curriculum; Social Studies; Units of Study
IDENTIFIERS *Media Ethics; Media Responsibility

ABSTRACT

This document contains three lesson plans for teaching secondary school students about politics and the media. Each lesson plan includes an overview, a resource list, and learning activities. Lesson 1, "The Editing Room," teaches students about: (1) current affairs; (2) editing processes in selecting stories for newspapers, broadcasts, and magazines; and (3) how various audiences affect media selection. Lesson 2, "The Politics of Politicizing," introduces key factors that increase a person's chances for political nomination and teaches students how to analyze political candidates' chances for success. Lesson 3, "National Security vs. the Citizens' Right To Know," helps students recognize the conflicts that occur when national security issues are published by the media. Rights afforded the public by the First Amendment are discussed, and students have the opportunity to consider media and government officials' positions. A specific case study is included for class discussion purposes. (JHP)

****
* Reproductions supplied by EDRS are the best that can be made *
* from the original document. *
****

ED302491

LESSON PLANS FOR TEACHING ABOUT POLITICS AND THE MEDIA:

CLOSE UP SUMMER INSTITUTE

by

Walter Lester

"PERMISSION TO REPRODUCE THIS MATERIAL HAS BEEN GRANTED BY
WALTER LESTER

TO THE EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)."

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
Office of Educational Research and Improvement
EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)
☒ This document has been reproduced as received from the person or organization originating it.
☐ Minor changes have been made to improve reproduction quality.
• Points of view or opinions stated in this document do not necessarily represent official OERI position or policy.

SO 019 598

Educ W 505-Workshops and Social Studies Education
C. Frederick Risinger
Indiana University
August 5, 1988

THE EDITING ROOM

Overview

This activity can be an exciting way for students to learn about current affairs. It is also seen as a way to teach students an understanding of the decision making and editing processes that go into choosing the types of stories for newspapers, broadcasts and magazines. The main emphasis of this exercise is to get students to understand how the public, as various types of audiences, can effect the types of stories chosen to be reported on.

Objectives

1. To discover the types of stories considered "newsworthy" by various audiences and media.

2. To analyze material, based on a given audience, and report on news that will appeal to this audience.

3. To lead to an understanding of how one geographic, ethnic, or cultural area reports the news in comparison to another. (i.e. Washington Times vs. local "small town" paper.

Resources

1. Four packets containing identical items from the following types of material:
    A. Local newspapers
    B. National Newspapers
    C. News magazines (TIME, Newsweek)
    D. Tabloids (Gazette, People Magazine)

   These should be collected one week prior to the implementation of this exercise so that the items represent current events.

2. A videotape of any actual news broadcast (national or local) taped during the same week that the above information was collected.

Procedures

1. Divide students into four groups. Explain that the purpose of this acitivity is to give students insight into the types of decisions that go into "choosing the news" that a given type of audience will view, and to see how an audience does effect these decisions.

2. Each group is assigned to produce a news broadcast using items of their choice from the information packets they have been given.

3. Each group is confidentially assigned one of the following situations, i.e. members of each group only know their audience and not that of the other groups.

   A. This news show broadcasts nationally via a syndicated network.
   B. This news show broadcasts via a local television station in your area. This station directly competes with another local network news show broadcast at the same time.
   C. This news show is broadcast via a public television station.
   D. This news show is broadcast to U.S. Military personnel stationed overseas.

4. Students are given ample time to consider their given type of audience and develop a 10 minute news show that they feel would appeal to the audience. Two or three students should be chosen by each group to present their broadcast.

5. Bring students back to the large group and have them present the four broadcasts.

6. Have students guess the type of audience that each groups broadcast may have been written for.

7. Analyze how the audience can effect the news. Ask if any students have had the experience of traveling to other geographic locations, cultures, etc. and noticing these differences. Have them share the things they noticed.

8. Discuss the different types of stories that were chosen and ask each group to defend two of their choices.

9. At this time have students view the videotape of an actual news show and compare how many of their news items were included in this broadcast.

10. Conclude with a summary of the types of decisions that go into choosing "newsworthy" items and how the audience can determine the criteria by which these are judged.

THE POLITICS OF POLITICIZING

Overview

Students will be introduced to key factors thought to be responsible for successful nomination. These include financial backing and polical advisors capable of running a successful campaign, personality and countenance which appeals to the voting population, proper image based on accepted standards and values within the voting area, the candidates use of the media and stands on political issues. Students will then be asked to select a well known candidate running for political office in their state and predict the persons success based on the factors stated above.

Objectives

1. To examine the key factors thought to increase chances of a successful nomination.

2. To analyze the application of these factors in an actual campaign, and the candidates success or failure in each area.

3. To predict the candidate's chance of nomination based on these factors.

Resources

1. Political cartoons, video tapes, news articles, commercials, and campaign materials to be collected and used by the teacher to demonstrate the factors to be presented above.

2. Newspaper articles written about the candidate, as well as articles discussing important issues of the election and the states political agenda.

3. The candidates campaign materials, posters, bumper stickers, advertisements, etc.

4. Financial disclosure statements for candidates previously running for the office of the candidate students select. (This can be obtained from the party headquarters in your state.)

5. Any personal information about the candidate, i.e. marital status, children, occupation, etc.

Procedures

1. Presentation of an educator prepared lecture elaborating on and demonstrating the successful or unsuccessful use by candidates of the following key factors thought to influence political nomination:

   A. Financial backing. (Teacher and students could examine the finances of Bush and Dukakis verses their opponents.)

   B. Appearance in the media. (Could use a variety of taped commercials both political and otherwise to show people who are appealing to the public vs. those who aren't)

   C. Image appropriate for the office and state values and political climate. (Gary Hart affair)

   D. Political Consultants (Show have political advisors can make or break a bid for nomination. Dole's firing of chief advisor, or Roger Ales who successfully led the campaign for Reagan and who is now the advisor for Bush)

2. Following the teacher presentation, students are asked, as a group, to select one fairly well known candidate running for political office in their state.

3. Divide students into four groups and appoint each group with one of the following tasks. Each group will prepare a report which includes the following information. Students will need to work in class as well as out of class to perform their task. The teacher can direct students as to where they could find the necessary information.

   A. Based on the office this candidate is running for examine the financial disclosure statements and determine the approximate cost of running for this office. Does the group feel this candidates finances are strong? What is the financial status of his/her opponents?

   B. Identify this candidates strong points and weak points when presented in the media. Are there political cartoons that point out these weaknesses? How do the candidates political commercials and campaign literature depict him/her?

C. Look at the candidate from the standpoint of how well they "fit" in your state. Is this an ultra-conservative or a liberal? Are they a person with moral flaws or of high integrity?

D. What is the name of the person chairing the candidates campaign? What issues does this person have the candidate responding to? What are the candidates views on these issues?

4. Return to large group and have a representative from each group present their findings.

5. Have students identify key areas which seem to increase the candidates chance for successful nomination based on these findings. Do students feel this candidate will be nominated? Why or why not?

6. Can students identify areas where they would run the campaign differently if given the opportunity?

7. Based on this exercise do students feel that the factors they explored truly do determine chances for nomination?

8. An alternate exercise would be to have students examine the campaigns of two opposing candidates such as Bush and Dukakis.

NATIONAL SECURITY vs. THE CITIZENS "RIGHT TO KNOW"

Overview

This activity helps students recognize the common conflicts arising when national issues thought to require public secrecy are learned of by agents of the media. This lesson could be used as a concrete application of first ammendment rights. Using a true life situation, students are asked to consider both the position of government and media officials in such situations as described above.

Objectives

1. Examine the role of the press on the basis of rights and limits afforded by the first ammendment.
2. To analyze the concept of national security vs. the publics perception of their "right to know".
3. To understand the positions of govermental and media representatives in situations of national security.
4. To realize the vagueness of the concept of national security and the difficulty in determining who should be allowed to define the limits.

Resources

1. Senario sheet
2. Newspapers, magazines and video tapes of newsbroadcasts released following preliminary knowledge of "Arms for Hostage" deals.

Procedures

1. Divide students into three or four small groups. Distribute senario sheet. Introduce the activity by explaining that the role of each group is to function as the editorial board for a national news magazine.
2. Allow students ample time to read the senario and react within their group. Functioning in the role of an editorial board they should reach a concensus.
3. Bring students back together and discuss their reactions.

4. Ask students to consider the senario from the side of governmental officials who felt secrecy was needed to protect the lives of U.S. citizens held hostage.

5. Distribute and/or view news materials collected which delt with initial public knowledge of the "Arms for Hostages" (Iran/Contra) Affair. The purpose of this activity is to show students how the media actually covered this event.

6. Have students return to their original small groups. Each group will be asked to develop a policy of national security which deals with such issues, one from the position of media officials and one from the position of govermental officials. This will allow students to examine national security from both points of view.

7. Students return to large group. Discuss other situations which students recall where the media was in possession of facts that a political leader did not want released? What were the similarities between those situations and the Iran/Contra issue?

SENARIO SHEET

You are the editor of a widely read newspaper which has a reputation for accuracy. Through reputable sources, one of your reporters has learned the details of what is most likely a story of major importance to U.S. citizens: The United States is involved in a deal which would provide military arms to a foreign nation in exchange for the release of U.S. citizens without congressional approval or knowledge. An exchange of this sort was also against all previous precedence when dealing for the release of hostages.

The president is contacted to confirm the facts of the case. He asks that you not run the story, stating that the lives of U.S. hostages may be at stake.

Tonight you, as an editorial board, must make a decision to print the story or not.

Consider the following questions:

1. What effect will your decision have on your newspaper and other newspapers?

2. Does the public have the "right to know" about this plan. Why or why not?

3. What effect if any will your decision have on national security?

4. What responsibility does the editor have to the public, the president, the newspaper?

5. Would you print the story? Why?